

# **Proposed Beach Management Plan Preserves and Protects**

A Duxbury Beach Management Plan outlining the operation of one of the few beaches that protects endangered species while allowing 4-wheel drive vehicles  
To Page 15

## **PROPOSED**

### **From Page 1**

to drive through has been submitted to the selectmen.

The plan is required to be drawn every 5 years by the Duxbury Beach Committee to help guide the town in plans to preserve the beach.

The committee was instrumental in establishing a higher lease amount, currently \$100,000 a year, to the reservation which owns the beach.

Committee Member Harriett Merry said the lease jumped from \$20,000 following the destructive storms of 1991 and 1992.

Duxbury Beach Reservation, Inc., is a Massachusetts charitable organization set up to preserve the beach. Responsibilities for the beach are divided between the reservations and the town.

Essentially, the reservation pays for materials and contractors to maintain and improve the beach, while the town pays for personnel to manage the daily use.

The area leased includes both Duxbury and Plymouth. It spans from the northerly edge of the resident beach parking, including beach and dune areas, roadways, parking lots and the back barrier access roadway from Powder Point Bridge to Gurnet-Saquish.

Les Smith, a coastal geologist who is a member of the reservation and also worked on the beach committee report, says the peaceful co-existence of cars and wildlife is unusual.

"Duxbury is one of the few beaches open to vehicles while still maintaining successful protection of endangered species," he said. "Most of that credit goes to (Harbormaster) Don Beers and his staff," Smith said.

"Protecting endangered species without allowing some uses is the easy way. You just put up a sign and tell everybody to go home," he said, indicating Duxbury has been successful in balancing both.

The use of off-road vehicles at the beach is complicated by a spit of land lying at the end of the barrier beach, known as Gurnet-Saquish, which is actually in Plymouth. The only access residents of that section have to their homes is over the beach. The deed to Duxbury Beach ensures this right of way remains available.

For other vehicles, there is a 500-car limit which was reached in 1994 over the July 4th weekend. The average summer weekend in the 1994 peak access season drew 400 cars and on weekdays, 150 would show up.

The Harbormaster/Coastal Natural Resources Officers patrol the beaches year round, according to the report. Summer patrols between July and August start at 6 am and end at 2 am, 7 days a week.

During late fall and early spring, patrols run daily from 8 am to 11 pm. In winter, patrols start at 8 am and run until 6 pm, except for weekend shifts which run through midnight, the report said.

Duxbury Clipper, Wednesday, March 6, 1996

Merry said Police Chief Enrico Cappucci has reported fewer incidents at the beach which require police involvement, crediting the change to increased use by families.

The report did note that "Off-road vehicles pose a threat to wetland resource areas if they are allowed to operate without proper management controls.

It also mentioned restrictions that "have been incorporated into specific management recommendations for Duxbury Beach:

- Restrict ORV use, whenever possible, to the outer ocean beach, seaward of the driftline zone and expanding dune edge of the upper backshore.

- Close beaches when they are narrow, especially during exceptionally high tide events, because not doing so forces drivers to travel along the face of dunes or through shorebird nesting sites and embryonic dunes.

- Protect nesting area of the least terns and other colonial shorebirds.

- Use fencing to enclose shorebird habitat areas (the report notes some programs recommend against fencing.)

- Posting signs at least 100 feet on either side of a colony. Pedestrians are urged not to approach any closer than 100 feet; vehicles can pass somewhat closer but people cannot leave their vehicles because doing so could scare the birds and lead to nesting failures.

- Restricting beach traffic to marked tracks.

- Enforcing strict leash laws for pets.

The report also recommends protecting the dunes from vehicular traffic by building dune ramps to permit cars and pedestrians access through dunes zones.

Duxbury actually has endangered species monitors hired through a protection grant funded by the reservation.

The report says the monitors "report directly to the Endangered Species Officer and are responsible for tracking the location of all piping plover chicks until they fledge."

The endangered species officer, who manages and implements the town's program of providing protection to piping plovers and terns is trained by the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Coastal Waterbird Program, the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program.

The report also refers to the many voluntary programs at the beach, including the yearly grass planting to build

15

up the dunes and the annual beach clean up.

Selectman James Murphy wondered how all the trash accumulates each year at the beach.

Beers said the public is pretty responsible that most of it washes up onto the shore rather than left by beach goers.

"I would guess 90 percent of it is tidal. The public even takes some of the trash that they find out there with them (to dispose of it)," he said. "People are pretty good."

The Duxbury Beach Management Plan which selectmen hope to use as a guideline to protect the town's natural resource, is available for viewing at the Duxbury Library.

By CHRIS PECK